

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. An instrument for stabilizing tissue for use with an instrument base, comprising;

an articulating arm having a plurality of link members arranged in a nested series, the link members being concatenated by a cable passing through a bore defined through each of the link members;

a mounting assembly operatively connected at one end of the articulating arm and a tissue engaging member operatively connected at the opposite end of the articulating arm;

an actuator operatively associated with the mounting assembly;

the cable being selectively movable by the actuator from a first, relaxed position which facilitates articulation of adjoining link members of the articulating arm and facilitates relative movement of the mounting assembly to the instrument base to a second, taut position which limits movement of the articulating arm and locks the mounting assembly relative to the instrument base.

2. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein the tissue engaging member includes a suction device operatively associated with the articulating arm.

3. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein at least one of the link members of the articulating arm includes a generally convex distal

portion and an adjacent link member includes a corresponding concave proximal portion which nestingly receives the convex distal portion therein.

4. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein the tissue engaging member includes a frame having a pair of legs which extend therefrom, the legs being dimensioned to position tissue therebetween.

5. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein the tissue engaging member is selected from the group consisting of mechanical stabilizers, organ manipulating devices, suction devices, irrigation devices, illumination devices, and blowing devices.

6. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein the mounting assembly includes first and second opposed and relatively movable mounting portions which are selectively positionable relative to the instrument base upon activation of the actuator.

7. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 1 wherein the actuator includes a fixed handle and a toggle handle, the toggle handle being selectively movable relative to the fixed handle from a first position wherein the fixed handle and the toggle handle are disposed in spaced-apart relation relative to one another to at least one subsequent position wherein the toggle handle is closer to the fixed handle.

8. An instrument for stabilizing tissue according to claim 7 wherein movement of the toggle handle from the first position to the at least one subsequent position stresses the cable which limits movement of the articulation arm.